
Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

August 7, 2003

Hot Topics



TDH Reports West Nile Deaths

TDH has reported the first human fatalities from West Nile virus (WNV) encephalitis in Texas for 2003. These are the 12th and 13th cases of WNV encephalitis in Texas this year. The cases, reported on July 31, include an 85-year-old woman from Ellis County who died July 27, and a 68-year-old man from Montgomery County who died July 20.

In order to protect the blood supply, the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) is checking each donation for WNV. Texas Blood Centers are forwarding information on all positives to the Zoonosis Control Division. Which are then reported to CDC. To date, a total of 14 Texas blood donors from 8 counties have tested positive. All have been asymptomatic.

For 2003, as of July 31, total human cases reported stand at 13 from 9 counties, with 2 fatalities; total equine cases reported are 28 from 22 counties; total positive birds reported are 106 from 18 counties; and total positive mosquito pools are 231 from 16 counties. An overall total of 46 counties have reported WNV positive samples or cases this year. *For more information, contact Jim Schuermann, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Commissioner Presents New Immunizations Plan

Dr. Eduardo Sanchez unveiled a five-point state action plan to increase childhood immunization rates at a TDH news conference on Thursday, July 31. The new plan will:

1. Enact emergency rules to require a fifth diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis (DTaP) immunization at age 4;
2. Initiate a *Back to School* campaign for immunization of schoolchildren and siblings;
3. Launch a new bilingual multimedia public awareness campaign on immunizations;
4. Expedite new business recommendations to improve the state's immunization program; and
5. Quickly implement new legislation supporting immunizations.

For more information, contact Casey Blass at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2175, or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.



Texas Immunization Rates Dip in National Survey

71 Percent of Toddlers Fully Immunized

The results of the National Immunization Survey (NIS) for 2002 were released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday, Aug 1. The survey shows that about 71 percent of Texas children ages 19 months through 35 months were fully immunized against five diseases last year. The state's rate the previous year was 74.9 percent. These figures put Texas 45th among states for children in this age group to have the 4:3:1 vaccine series, which includes four doses of diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis vaccine, three doses of polio vaccine and one dose of any measles-containing vaccine.

The NIS survey for 2002 covers about 30,000 children in all 50 states and in 28 specific metropolitan areas. The national immunization rate for 2002 for the 4:3:1 series was 78.5 percent. That national figure is about the same as the 78.6 percent the previous year.

Four Texas communities are among the 28 metropolitan areas surveyed nationally. Their immunization rates are: Bexar County, 76.4 percent, up from 75.1 percent the previous year; Houston at 64.2 percent, down from 70.5 percent in 2001; Dallas County at 77.3 percent, up from 68.9 percent; and El Paso at 78.6 percent, up from 69.2 percent. The rate for the rest of the state was 70.6 percent. *For more information, contact Casey Blass, Chief, Bureau of Immunizations, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2175, or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Reduction In Force Begins

A total of 84 staff received Reduction in Force (RIF) letters on Monday, July 28. These included 33 staff members from the TDH Central Office, 48 from the TDH Regional Offices, and 3 from the Texas Health Care Information Council (THCIC). As of Thursday, July 31, there were 73 employees left to place: Central Office - 30; Regional Offices - 40; and THCIC - 3. Individuals who received RIF letters must submit their choice of options on Friday, August 1. TDH continues to work to place the remaining staff. *For more information, contact Wanda Thompson, Associateship for Operational Support, at (512) 458-7720 or e-mail wanda.thompson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



WorthIt? Television and Radio Advertisements

New WorthIt? television and radio advertisements targeting teens began airing on July 27. The new spots highlight the four thousand chemicals in secondhand smoke. *For more information, contact Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease & Tobacco Prevention, at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Crime Stoppers Holds Press Conference on Infant Formula Theft

Crime Stoppers of Houston held a press conference July 29 regarding the danger posed to Texas children from compromised infant formula and asked the public's help in reporting theft, improper storage, transport and sale of the product. The media were interested in the potential dangers of affected formula, if there is documentation of long-term problems to infants due to the source of the product, and how consumers can ensure they obtain high-quality product. Representatives from TDH Bureau of Food and Drug Safety discussed the Health and Safety Code violations involved in the trafficking of stolen infant formula and the measures they are taking along with the Texas Attorney General's

Office to halt the practice and punish offenders. Civil lawsuits have been initiated against 14 individuals believed to be involved in the theft and resale of infant formula as a result of TDH inspections and seizures of suspected stolen product totaling over \$750,000. Because WIC purchases a large volume of infant formula, there was concern that WIC clients could be at risk for purchasing compromised formula. WIC was portrayed as a very worthwhile nutrition program and a partner in the effort to stop the theft. Crime Stoppers is offering a reward in regard to formula theft. *For more information, contact Valerie Wolfe, WIC Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2072, or e-mail valerie.wolfe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH to Restructure Minority Health

Beginning in September, TDH will restructure its' minority health services to focus on measurable outcomes for specific health disparities and integration of minority health strategies in all appropriate programs and partnerships. TDH will work with community and private partners to increase local capacity for improving minority health status through funding for regional offices. The department will maintain an external focus and continue to disseminate information and link communities to resources and partners.

Efforts will be shepherded by the Office of Minority Health contained within the Office of Public Health Practice. The larger group serves the needs of local public health agencies, TDH regional public health and local communities. Staff will work to integrate minority health strategies, including multi-lingual communications, in programs and with health and human service agencies, as appropriate. They will also work to ensure that TDH is able to collect and provide data necessary for monitoring the agency's activities that address the needs of racial and ethnic minorities.

The new restructured minority health program will focus on:

- promoting childhood immunizations and increasing immunization rates among minority populations;
- promoting increased regular physical activity and fitness for racial and ethnic minorities;
- decreasing obesity among racial and ethnic minorities;
- discouraging tobacco use among minority youth;
- promoting responsible sexual behavior among minority youth and adults; and
- promoting adequate prenatal care among minority women.

For more information, contact Mary Soto, Office of Public Health Practice, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6559, or e-mail mary.soto@tdh.state.tx.us.



TDH Presents Conscientious Exemption Guidelines

On June 10, the Governor signed House Bill 2292, which included an amendment allowing an exemption to immunization requirements for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs. Effective September 1, exemptions from Texas immunization requirements may be granted by school officials provided the parent or guardian has submitted an official TDH affidavit requesting the exemption.

Guidelines for Requesting an Exemption for Reasons of Conscience:

- Only official forms developed and issued by TDH, Immunization Division, will be accepted. No other forms or reproductions will be allowed.
- All requests for an official TDH form must be submitted, in writing, to the TDH, Immunization Division, 1100 West 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756.
- Forms will be available by September 1.
- Requests cannot be submitted verbally, or via telephone.
- The official TDH form must be notarized and submitted to school officials within ninety days of notarization.
- A separate form is required for each child.

For more information, contact Monica Gamez, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail monica.gamez@tdh.state.tx.us.



300 Attend Tobacco Prevention and Control Gathering.

The Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control held the Texas Youth Tobacco Summit and Comprehensive Tobacco Conference in the Woodlands. The conference brought together over 300 youths, adults, law enforcers, and other stakeholders. Topics covered included information about conducting community interventions, leadership skills for youths, and Teen Ambassador workshops. This is the third year this conference has been sponsored by TDH. *For more information, contact Phillip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention, at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail phillip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Provides Integrated Mosquito Management Publication

Integrated Mosquito Management, a new publication that provides the framework to build a local mosquito control program, is being made available to Texas city and county governments. Mosquitoes present a year-round problem to Texas residents and are responsible for the spread of diseases to humans, livestock and wildlife. Sometimes their numbers make the enjoyment outdoor activities difficult if not impossible. To minimize the effects of mosquito-borne diseases and annoyance, many cities and counties statewide are considering or have already established a mosquito control program. This booklet is provided to meet the need for resource materials in developing such a program. *For more information, contact Rick Bays, Associate Commissioner for Consumer Health Protection, at (512) 458-7338 or e-mail rick.bays@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Forum on Excellence to Feature TDH

TDH has been invited for the second year in a row to present at the August 8 University of Texas Forum on Excellence. The Forum is sponsored by the UT Organizational Excellence Group, which authors and oversees the Survey of Organizational Excellence. Last year, TDH was recognized as having a statewide Best Practice in pre-survey marketing for employee participation, highlighting a 71% participation increase for the agency. This year, we are being honored as having statewide Best Practices in post-survey implementation and marketing of changes to staff. Wanda Thompson and Robin

Scott will present on behalf of TDH. The Forum on Excellence audience includes representatives from the Governor's Budget Office and Legislative Budget Board, other Texas agency leadership, and Organizational Improvement professionals from many states. *For more information, contact Wanda Thompson, Associate Commissioner, at (512) 458-7548 or e-mail wanda.Thompson@tdh.state.tx.us or Robin Scott at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6114, or e-mail robin.scott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Begins Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communications Training

TDH's Office of Communications has begun offering Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communication training. The course is designed to prepare those who may have to communicate with the public or mobilize their community during a major public health emergency or disease outbreak. The course covers how to handle communications in a crisis situation, including understanding psychological factors; preparing for the first 48 hours; working with the media; roles and responsibilities; and developing skills as a spokesperson. Participants also will have the opportunity to "face the media," during an experiential on-camera activity.

Trainings were held in Austin (July 8-9), Tyler (July 22-23) and Arlington (Aug. 20-21). Additional classes are scheduled for El Paso (Sept. 16-17), Bryan COG (Oct. 9), Midland (Oct. 14-15) and Lubbock (Nov. 13-14). Additional classes will be scheduled across the state throughout the year. *For more information, contact Andrea Littlefield, TDH Office of Communication, at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail andrea.littlefield@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks



Salmonella Group B Outbreak

TDH Region 6 and 5 South was notified early in July that inmates in the TDCJ Darrington Unit, which houses about 1700 inmates, had recently reported gastrointestinal illness. About 600 inmates were affected. The symptoms included fever, nausea, vomiting, chills, headache, and diarrhea. The earliest onset of illness was on July 2, 2003. No prison employees reported similar symptoms.

On July 4, 13 specimens were collected from ill inmates and sent to TDH Lab for testing. The lab reported on July 7 that 9 stool specimens and 1 rectal swab contained *Salmonella* Group B.

On July 7 and 8, 5 sanitarians from PHR 6/5S were sent to the unit to collect food samples, interview the 160 inmate food handlers, and to inspect the kitchens. Ten food samples from the lunch and dinner served on July 2, were collected and sent to City of Houston Health Dept. Lab. Two food items served at lunch (chicken and pea salad) were reported on July 11 to contain *Salmonella* Group B. *For more information, contact Huai Lin, Regional Epidemiologist, at (713) 767-3232 or e-mail huai.lin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Foodborne/Waterborne Outbreak

Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division staff members have been assisting TDH Regions 5S/6 in their investigation of an outbreak of salmonellosis that occurred during the first week of July, in a Texas Department of Criminal Justice facility,

outside of Houston. More than 600 inmates were sickened in this outbreak. Ten stool specimens submitted to the TDH laboratory tested positive for *Salmonella* Heidelberg. Two food items leftover from the lunch served on July 2 also tested positive for *S. Heidelberg* at the City of Houston laboratory. A case-control study has been conducted which included the administration of a food history questionnaire to 69 ill and 62 non-ill inmates. These data, along with other information collected during the investigation, are being analyzed. *For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Monkeypox Cases

Efforts to trace involved animals have revealed no additional links to Texas. Though other states are carrying out investigations, human cases have been confirmed in only Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana. By all indications, Texas remains free of both human and animal disease caused by Monkeypox.

The 2-man team provided to TDH by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to aid in tracing the movement of implicated animals and securing specimens for CDC testing has returned to CDC.

The joint order issued by the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration on June 11 to prevent further dissemination of Monkeypox in the United States remains in effect. *For more information, contact Tom Sidwa, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail tom.sidwa@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Training



Bioterrorism Training

Region 7, Public Health Nurses recently participated in a two day Bioterrorism training on the Regional Smallpox Plan and setting up mass clinics. This training was a combined effort with Nursing, Emergency Response Team, and Immunizations converging to strengthen knowledge and skills for activating mass clinics in the event of a significant disease outbreak or bioterrorism event. This is part of an ongoing training process to ensure that the Region Seven response team has the appropriate skills and abilities to meet any public health threat that may occur. *For more information, contact Pat Collins, Region 7, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2105, or e-mail pat.collins@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Surveillance Training

The Regional E.R.T. staff hosted Public Health Surveillance Training in Midland; training was under the direction of the faculty from the University of Texas Public Health School. Over 50 participants from West Texas participated in the event. *For more information, contact Dr. Charles Gaiser, Zoonosis Control, at (915) 834-7782 or e-mail charles.gaiser@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Brown Bag Discussions Recognize National Immunization Awareness Month

In recognition of National Immunization Awareness month, the Immunization Division will be hosting a series of “brown bag” sessions during the month of August. Presentations presented by noted physicians and researchers will discuss Vaccine

Preventable Diseases, VPD' and other immunization issues affecting children, adolescents, and adults. Various pharmaceutical programs sponsor the remote speaker series. The first of this series was held on July 15, and featured Dr. Jaime Fergie, Driscoll Children's Hospital of Corpus Christi. In his discussion on "Combination Vaccines", information on the dramatic reduction of Hib disease since licensure of the vaccine in 1988, simply reiterates that vaccines work! Several dates are scheduled at the Central Office location in August. Please mark your calendar for upcoming opportunities. *For more information, contact Vivian Harris, Communication and Training, Immunization Division, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail vivian.harris@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Administration



Purchasing Consolidation

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has formed two workgroups for implementing the purchasing consolidation as outlined in House Bill 2292. One is for the purchase of client services and one for procurement of goods and all other services. The charter for the consolidation has been completed and workgroup members named. Although the two workgroups will be meeting separately, they will be working collaboratively and ultimately combined into one. Contract management is not within the scope of the purchasing consolidation. Purchasing activities are expected to be consolidated September 1. This consolidation effort will result in: a single line of management over purchasing and contracting for all HHS agencies; standardized procurement and contracting policies and procedures; and economies of scale and reorganizational activities. The previous work done by the FAIR teams to standardize TDH policies and procedures will assist us in this transition. The workgroup will be responsible for developing a risk management plan, a communications plan and an implementation plan. *For more information, contact Bob Burnette, Central Procurement Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6951, or e-mail bob.burnette@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Information Resources Consolidation

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is beginning the feasibility and planning effort for the implementation of House Bill 2292 as it relates to Information Technology. A charter has been drafted to move forward on the consolidation of Information Resources with an anticipated September 1 consolidation. The Information Resource Managers (IRMs) were asked to provide feedback on the charter and TDH submitted comments to HHSC on July 11. The scope of the charter includes organizational structure, IRM consolidation, contract consolidation, and current systems review. Short- and long-range plans will be used. Gregg Phillips of HHSC is the Executive Sponsor and Charlotte Willis is the Project Manager. Dr. Sanchez will be asked to appoint a team member from TDH to participate in the study. The study will take approximately 60 days. *For more information, contact Tom Thornton, Associateship for Information Systems, at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Facilities Management Services Moves to Texas Building and Procurement

A total of 28 employees who currently work in TDH facilities management have been notified that they will be part of the reduction in force as their positions have been moved, by legislation, to the Texas Building and Procurement Commission (TBPC).

House Bill 3042, passed by the 78th Legislature, requires TBPC to provide “facilities management services” to all state agency facilities in Travis County and adjacent counties. That will include construction, maintenance, repairs, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, locksmith, painting, Heating, Ventilation and Air Condition Services (HVAC), central plant operations, custodial, security, grounds, fire alarms, pest control, paper recycling and trash disposal. All TDH funding, including salaries, will transfer to TBPC effective September 1. TBPC has indicated that current TDH employees may compete for a limited number of positions. *For more information, contact Wanda Thompson, Associateship for Operational Support, at (512) 458-7720 or e-mail wanda.thompson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Change Management Initiative

The Associateship for Operational Support has developed a change management initiative for the agency. This includes a series of activities throughout the coming months aimed at providing agency employees with two-way communication in which they can receive up-to-date information and can provide input into ongoing change projects.

Change management initiatives include:

- a TDH in Transition Web Site that provides the latest information on consolidation issues, RIF procedures, personal and organizational change management strategies and links to computer based training;
- Challenge of Change Seminars provided by the Worker’s Assistance Program and available to all TDH employees;
- Stress Management Seminars provided by the Worker’s Assistance Program and available to all TDH employees;
- Division and Region stress management sessions that allow employees an opportunity to express their concerns about coming changes and to identify possible solutions to anticipated problems;
- benefits for RIFed employees including debriefing with Employee Assistance Program counselors, an orientation from the Workforce Commission, and workshops in resume writing and how to collect unemployment benefits;
- Survival Workshops for the employees “left behind” to help them focus on the work ahead and to feel part of the new structure; and Focus Groups throughout the agency to ensure a vehicle for communicating employees’ concerns and suggestions to upper management.

For more information, contact Wanda Thompson, Associateship for Operational Support, at (512) 458-7720 or e-mail wanda.thompson@tdh.state.tx.us.



Day to Lead Bureau of Financial Services

Wilson Day has been hired as the new Bureau Chief for Financial Services. Wilson brings to the job approximately 14 years of experience with the Comptroller of Public Accounts. He was instrumental in the implementation of the Uniform Statewide Payroll System, and has served as manager of Expenditure Research and Assistance. In his most recent role of Ombudsman for the Comptrollers’ Claims Division, he has assumed the project management role to address critical needs in various state agencies. This included reconciliation projects at both Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and TDH and day-to-day operations at smaller agencies where key individuals have retired or resigned. *For*

more information, contact Machel Pharr, Chief Financial Officer, at (512) 458-7640 or e-mail machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.



Williams Named Human Resources Director

James Williams was appointed Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Human Resource (HR) Director for TDH effective July 1. Just prior to that, James served as Acting HR Director for six months. He began his career with the State of Texas in 1977 with the Governor's Office. Since then, he has service as Assistant Director of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Regional HR Manager at DHS-Austin Region, Director of Human Resources at the Texas Water Development Board, and HR Director at the Texas Natural Conservation Commission. He has an M.A. from the University of Oklahoma and a B.A. from Langston University in Oklahoma. For more information, contact Wanda Thompson, Associateship for Operational Support, at (512) 458-7720 or e-mail wanda.thompson@tdh.state.tx.us.

Awards / Recognition



Grant of Award for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) Funds

Notice of Grant of Award for Ryan White CARE Act Title II Supplemental ADAP Funds. The Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) awarded an additional \$6,187,328 to the state of Texas for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). To-date, for the 2003 federal fiscal year, the State has been awarded \$54,622,098 in federal aid for the ADAP Program and \$20,194,363 in base funds to provide health and support services to persons living with HIV disease in Texas. The required State match for these funds is \$35,861,399. For more information, contact Michelle Porter, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail michelle.porter@tdh.state.tx.us.



United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Honor Award

Dr. Lee Jan, Director, Meat Safety Assurance Division was presented (in absentia) with a USDA Honor Award during a ceremony in Washington D.C. on June 13. The award was presented to members of the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), Field Automation and Information Management (FAIM) Team. The nomination described the FAIM program as a critical initiative supporting the FSIS "Public Health Mission". The objective of FAIM is to analyze the inspection and business practices of the Agency and systematically apply automation to those processes to improve productivity, inspection effectiveness, and service to industry. For more information contact Lee Jan, Meat Safety Assurance Division, at (512) 719-0205 or e-mail lee.jan@tdh.state.tx.us.



Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) Award

Dan Sowards, Director of the Manufactured Foods Division, won the prestigious Harvey W. Wiley award, at the annual AFDO Educational Conference in Chicago, Illinois. The Wiley award, the highest award given by AFDO, is presented to the member who has demonstrated, through the performance of duties, outstanding service and devotion to the administration of food, drug, and consumer protection laws of our country. Dan has represented AFDO on the National Partnership for Food Security, and is one of two TDH co-chairs on the Texas Food Safety Task Force. For more information, contact Susan Tennyson, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety, at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail susan.tennyson@tdh.state.tx.us.



Border Heroes Award

Mr. David Kolberson, RN, Regional Epidemiologist Response Team Nurse, received a special recognition during ceremonies hosted by the El Paso Chapter of the American Red Cross. The Red Cross honored Mr. Kolberson for risking his safety to help save the lives of wounded FBI agents during special operations. Mr. Kolberson is a longtime volunteer member of the Area Disaster Medical Response Team. *For more information, contact David Kolberson, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance, at (915) 834-7778 or e-mail david.kolberson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



CDC to Showcase STD Awareness Media Campaign Developed by TDH

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has selected the Texas STD Awareness media campaign developed and implemented by the TDH as one of three examples to be showcased on CDCynergy. CDCynergy is a CD-ROM-based educational tool intended to help public health professionals in systematically designing health communication plans and health interventions within public health framework. CDC is paying for a Training and Public Education Branch (TPEB) staff member to travel to Atlanta to tape several content consultant videos for the CD-ROM. *For more information, contact Greg Beets, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail greg.beets@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Program Updates



CDC Allocated \$60.4 Million to TDH for Public Health Preparedness

CDC allocated \$60.4 million to TDH to support continued public health (bioterrorism, other infectious disease outbreaks and additional public health threats and emergencies) preparedness and response activities. This includes \$ 48.3 base allocation, \$ 4.7 for Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) activities, and \$7.3 for Smallpox activities. TDH developed its FY04 work plan using guidance that CDC released in May; after review by stakeholders and TDH Executive Management Staff, the plan was submitted to CDC on June 27. Approval of the grant application is expected in time to begin expending funds on August 31, start date of the FY04 project period.

It is expected that approximately \$38.7 million will be allocated to local and regional health departments. TDH staff are reviewing local work plans so that contracts can be executed by September 1. Staff will begin reviewing regional work plans next week. *For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, Office of the State Epidemiologist (OSE), at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Statewide Town Hall Meeting Regarding HIV Medication Program

Management of the Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP) has worked in coordination with Ryan White CARE Act Title II Administrative Agencies to plan and initiate statewide town hall meetings with client and community stakeholders regarding the changes to the THMP. Meetings were held between May 18 and July 17 - 18. The purpose of these meetings was to:

- Provide background information to stakeholders about the need for rule changes;

- Provide a summary of the proposed rule changes and timeline for rule implementation;
- Solicit verbal and written input on the proposed rule changes.

Meetings were held in Harlingen, Midland/Odessa, Bryan and Dallas. *For more information, contact Linda S. Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us*



Ryan White Planning Council Meeting

The HIV/STD Prevention Acting Bureau Chief, Linda Moore, attended the Ryan White Title I Planning Council meeting on Friday, August 1 in San Antonio to present information on the Texas HIV Medication Program proposed rules. *For more information, contact Linda Moore, Bureau of HIV/STD Prevention, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us*



Texas Vaccine for Children (TVFC) Program Site Visits

The TVFC Program has conducted quality assurance site visits in 1,114 clinic sites from January through June. The goal is to visit 2,771 (or 100% of the enrolled clinic sites). 757 of the visits were conducted in private provider clinic sites.

The education provided during the site visit is based on the national standard-of-care and includes a review of medical records for immunization coverage levels. The emphasis is to properly store and handle vaccine and to raise immunization levels. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Speaker Tool Kit

The Immunization Division's Communication and Training has developed a Speaker Tool Kit for the Governor's Commission for Women. The commission has made immunizations one of its top priorities this term and will host various public awareness events around the state, encourage local immunization coalitions to collaborate with stakeholder groups, and educate parents and doctors on immunization issues. The commissioners, seeking ways they can offer assistance to raise vaccination coverage levels for Texas Children, has offered to include positive messages on immunizations in their speaking engagements as they travel across the state on behalf of the Governor of Texas. The commission seeks to improve the personal and professional status of women in Texas and to advocate programs that provide solutions to problems faced by Texas women. The Governor appointed commissioners serve a two-year term. *For more information, contact Vivian Harris, Communication and Training, Immunization Division, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail vivian.harris@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pharmacy Inventory Control System (PICS) Update

PICS implementation continues for all anticipated programs except Immunization and HIV. Approximately 72% of TDH regions and local health departments replenished by the TDH Central Pharmacy Warehouse are participating in PICS. Pharmacy Division established an internal Help Desk to assist users.

The PICS Project Team trained participating locations by convening sessions in each of the eight TDH Regions. Pharmacy Division plans to provide centralized makeup training

for the remaining 28% of locations who missed the initial training sessions or who need additional assistance.

TDH Immunization Division proposes extending the PICS development contract period by funding Modification 9 to the current task order. An extension will permit PICS development contractor participation in modifying PICS Immunization program functionality. The extension is necessary because of delays in developing interfaces between other systems and PICS, design changes required by changing to a centralized vaccine distribution direct to providers system, and related revisions to the immunization program business processes. Without the extension, funding for the current effort will run out in August. The extension will permit a projected completion month of March 2004.

For more information, contact Dinny Smith, Pharmacy Division, at (512) 458-7500 or e-mail dinny.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.



Rural Roots: Texas Growth Conference

On August 26-27, Gary Heseltine, MD, MPH and Alma Thompson will co-present “Promoting a Successful Hepatitis C Campaign in Rural Texas” at the “Rural Roots: Texas Growth,” statewide health conference at the Doubletree Hotel in Austin. The Texas Rural Health Association and Texas Rural Health Partners, Inc are sponsoring the conference. Staff received notice of the abstract acceptance for a breakout training session on June 17.

On August 15, the hepatitis C staff will exhibit a booth on infectious and preventable disease, including hepatitis C, to an estimated 300 Central Texas families and their school-age children as part of the Manor ISD Resource Fair. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB Standards, Delegation Orders in Review

The TB Elimination Division Standards of Performance and model Standing Delegation Orders are in the process of review. Draft documents incorporating recommendations from the new national TB treatment guidelines have been circulated to regional and metro TB program managers for their comments. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hansen’s Disease Program Holds Meeting

The Hansen's Disease Program held a meeting in Austin on July 14-15. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the newest member of the nursing staff to the Central Office staff as well as the nurses from Houston and San Antonio. Herb Tolentino was recently selected as the HD coordinator for Region 11, in the Harlingen clinic. TDH resources were discussed and hands-on training of the Access database for Hansen’s was provided. *For more information, contact Virginia Enriquez, Hansen’s Disease Program TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail virginia.enriquez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Staff Present at National Refugee Symposium

On July 14-16 members of the Refugee Health Screening Program attended and made presentations at the “Refugee Health Information Network Symposium on Translated Health Materials for Refugees” in Bethesda, Maryland. This symposium on culturally

and linguistically appropriate health information for refugees and immigrants was an opportunity to share expertise gained by the Texas Refugee Health Screening Program on issues of interpretation and translations with a group of national experts in the field and to hear about best practices in these areas. A principal goal of the symposium was to improve the quality and availability of health information for refugees, immigrants, and other limited-English-speaking clients of health services. Attendance at this symposium was by invitation only. *For more information, contact Sam Householder, Refugee Health Screening Program, at (512) 458-7494 or e-mail sam.householder@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Ten Against TB (TATB) Plan ‘Intensive’ Trainings

TATB is collaborating with the TB Education Center to present a tuberculosis training opportunity for public health and correctional facility employees in the El Paso/Juarez area on September 10-12. They are also working with the Francis J. Curry National TB Center to present “Tuberculosis Intensive” on South Padre Island on September 22-24. This course is for clinicians in the U.S.-Mexico border region who diagnose and treat patients with tuberculosis. Simultaneous interpreters will enable participants to hear the presentations in either English or Spanish. TATB is working with the Office of Border Health and the U.S. Mexico Border Health Commission to facilitate the transfer to Mexican health departments of surplus equipment including at least 8 biosafety hoods from the old TDH laboratory facilities and over 60 computers gathered by the TB Elimination Division. *For more information contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us or Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Syphilis Elimination Coordinator Attends CDC Conference

The Syphilis Elimination Coordinator attended a meeting in Atlanta, GA with staff from the HIV and STD Programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and eight cities with more than 100 cases of early syphilis in men who have sex with men (MSM), some of who are HIV-infected. These cities were Atlanta, Chicago, Ft. Lauderdale, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco. Also attending this meeting were two community representatives from each city. The meeting was an opportunity for representatives from the eight cities to share information, thoughts and ideas about the efforts that will be most effective in stemming the epidemic of syphilis among MSMs in their cities. During this meeting, CDC introduced supplemental funding ranging from \$200,000 to \$500,000 for each city to support intervention to stem the epidemic. *For more information, contact Caeli Paradise, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail caeli.paradise@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HIV Medication Advisory Committee meeting

The HIV Medication Advisory Committee (Committee) met on May 2. Agenda items included consideration of addition of a new drug, Fuzeon. The drug company representative for Roche discussed the addition of Fuzeon with the Committee members. The recommendation of the Committee members to Bureau staff regarding the possible addition of Fuzeon was that the Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP) continues to evaluate the possibility of adding Fuzeon if the current budget deficit improves. At this point, Fuzeon is not on the THMP drug formulary and, therefore, is not currently available to clients who receive HIV medications through THMP. *For more information,*

contact Linda S. Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.



Texas Diabetes Program/Council

November 2003 is Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson's anticipated launch of its Diabetes Detection Initiative. This initiative will address diabetes by focusing on a health communications approach in highly targeted, high prevalence communities using both community interventions and health systems methods, e.g., targeted media message in neighborhoods after a referral follow up arrangement is in place with federally funded community health centers. The Texas Diabetes Program has provided significant input. *For more information, contact Jan Ozias, Manager, Texas Diabetes Program/Council, at (512) 458-7490 or e-mail jan.ozias@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Cardiovascular Health and Wellness

A meeting of the Texas Statewide Task Force on Arthritis supported by a grant from CDC was held June 12. The task force conducted a final review of the Texas State Plan to Reduce Arthritis and provided comments on action steps, timelines, and supporting organizations for the following prevention strategies: Surveillance, Data, and Outcome Management, Health Education and Outreach, Community Policy and Environmental Change, and Clinical Prevention and Treatment. *For more information, contact Jennifer Smith, Cardiovascular Health and Wellness Program, at (512) 458-7670 or e-mail jennifer.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Chemical Terrorism Laboratory Preparedness

Dr. Susan Neill and Dwight Schaeper attended a meeting at the USEPA Region 6 Laboratory in Houston to discuss state laboratory capabilities and capacities. State public health, environmental, agriculture, and veterinary diagnostic medicine laboratory representatives from Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas attended in addition to the USEPA representatives. The principal theme of the meeting was developing an Environmental Laboratory Response Network in USEPA Region 6. *For more information, contact Dwight Schaeper, Environmental Sciences Division, at (512) 458-7587 or e-mail dwight.schaeper@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Newborn Screening Specimens

In June, the Newborn Screening (NBS) Laboratory analyzed more than 294,800 tests on about 58,960 newborn screening specimens to provide results for the battery of five different disorders. *For more information, contact Eldridge T. Hutcheson, Biochemistry and Genetics Division, at (512) 458-7430 or e-mail eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Control of *Listeria Monocytogenes* on Ready-To-Eat Meat Products

The Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) published a new rule to better control *Listeria monocytogenes* on ready-to-eat meat products. The rule requires establishments to address control of the organism in their pathogen reduction systems by one or more of the following strategies: 1) implementing post packaging pasteurization, 2) addition of pathogen growth control substances, or 3) through sanitation. The controls must be validated through plant testing. The department will adopt the rule as required by the Texas Meat and Poultry Inspection Act and the Meat Safety Assurance Division will base frequency of testing on the type of controls the plants implement with the most intense

testing being conducted in plants that control the organism through sanitation only. *For more information contact Lee Jan, Meat Safety Assurance Division, at (512) 719-0205 or e-mail lee.jan@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Public Health Region 1



Mosquitoes Infected with the West Nile Virus was Confirmed

On July 11, seven pools of mosquitoes infected with the West Nile virus were confirmed in Lubbock County. Several pools of infected mosquitoes were detected within the Lubbock city limits. Two horses in Lamb County have confirmed cases of the virus and are undergoing treatment. Last year, there were 38 cases of the West Nile virus in horses in Lubbock County. Seven of the horses died. The City of Lubbock Vector Control has increased mosquito spraying activities countywide with targeted spraying in the areas where the virus has been detected. An advisory has been issued to citizens with recommended activities to reduce possible exposure to the infected mosquitoes. *For more information, contact Karen McDonald, Zoonosis Control, at (806) 767-0427 or e-mail karen.mcdonald@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rise in the Number of HIV Infections

Region 1 has had a rise in the number of HIV infections reported among a cluster of adolescent and teen homosexual males in the South Plains area since February 2003. There has been an increase of HIV and sexually transmitted infections in the midst of escalated high-risk behavior among this population. Regional and local health department staff have increased disease intervention activities and education. It appears that the number of infections has now stabilized. *For more information, contact Kent Keith, HIV/STD Health Resources, at (806) 767-0494 or e-mail kent.keith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Preparedness Workshop

Region 1 hosted the SNS preparedness workshop for 52 regional public health and safety professionals on July 16-17 in Plainview. The SNS is a national repository of life-saving pharmaceuticals and medical material that will be delivered to the site of a biological or chemical event in order to reduce morbidity and mortality. Attendees from Region 1 included county officials, law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers, hospital administrators, public health officials, public health nurses, and public health preparedness staff.

The workshop provided federal level guidance on the planning and logistics related to the SNS. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention led the two-day workshop, which included an overview of the national assets, training exercises, and planning breakout groups. Other presenters were representatives from the U.S. Marshals Service and the TDH in Austin and Lubbock. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (806) 655-7151 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Regions 4 and 5 North



WIC Office Opens in Camp County

Regions 4/5 North WIC program opened a new satellite clinic in Pittsburg, on July 24, in an affordable housing corporation which is sponsored by Pilgrim's Pride. It is expected that 400 more housing units will be completed by next year. As a result of this partnership, we anticipate our participation to steadily incline. We will be providing an easily accessible location for potential WIC clients who do not have reliable transportation. Our WIC program, which covers nine counties, has experienced a 20% growth in participation since June 2002, growing by almost 1200 participants. This partnership was a result of networking with participants of a recent Future Search conference. *For more information, contact Beth Lloyd, Regional WIC Director, at (903) 533-5380 or e-mail beth.lloyd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency Preparedness Drill Draws Wide Participation

The Deep East Texas Trauma Service Area H Regional Advisory Council held a Bioterrorism Drill/Exercise on July 17 from 8:30 - 12:00. The service area covers seven counties (Angelina, Nacogdoches, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, and Tyler) and includes ten hospitals. All the hospitals participated in the drill. The scenario was the intentional release of plague. Regional staff was asked to assist local areas in their response and also attended a debriefing held in Lufkin after the drill. *For more information, contact Paul McGaha, Regional Director, at (903) 533-5230 or e-mail paul.mcgaha@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Five Strategic National Stockpile informational meetings were held throughout the region during the month of June. They were conducted by Emergency Response Team Planner Paula Hughes and U.S. Marshall Charles LaFollette to increase the awareness about what planning, security, and help will be needed if we ever need a “push package” in East Texas. *For more information, contact Paula Hughes, ERT Planner, at (903) 533-5386 or e-mail paula.hughes@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6/5 South



Close Collaboration Proceeds Hurricane Claudette

Celine Hanson, M.D., Regional Director, Barbara Key, Regional Disaster Coordinator/Planner, Atkin Wilridge, Health Facility Licensure Program Manager, and other regional staff, collaborated with our local contact at Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management, Mr. Ryan, both before, during and following the landing of Hurricane Claudette on the Texas Gulf Coast. Regional staff collaborated with Mr. Rolando Garza, Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness and the Department of Human Services to provide updates on health care facilities (nursing homes, hospitals, dialysis center) operation status. *For more information, contact Celine Hanson, Regional Director at (713) 767-3019 or e-mail celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Presentations/Training

Dr. Hanson and regional staff attended the Pfizer-sponsored “Sana La Rana” community health event addressing cardiovascular disease and elevated cholesterol levels in Houston minorities on July 24.

Dr. Hanson participated in a Special Emphasis Review Panel for the Public Health Practice Program Office of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention on June 17-18 in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Hanson also participated in the quarterly Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) meeting on June 18-19 also held in Atlanta.

Regional Public Health Preparedness staff hosted the Strategic National Stockpile training for local health departments and relevant first responders in surrounding communities on June 9-11 with 85 participants in attendance.

Dr. Hanson gave a video conference presentation on “US Childhood Immunizations” in collaboration with Dr. Paul McGaha, Regional Director, Public Health Region 4/5 North, to the UT Tyler/Regional educational network on June 24.

Three regional staff attended the Department of Public Safety and the Office of Emergency Preparedness training on the “Medical Metropolitan Response System, (MMRS)” on July 21-23 in Austin. *For more information, contact Celine Hanson, Regional Director at (713) 767-3019 or e-mail celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public Health Preparedness Activities

Personnel from the Public Health Preparedness (PHP) team collaborated to review the FY04 Bioterrorism Grants submitted by ten local health departments in our jurisdiction.

The team shared their findings with the Office State Epidemiology, the Office of Public Health Practice and Focus Area leads and provided feedback to the applicants. Several personnel were involved in face-to-face meetings with officials from various health departments to provide technical assistance. Regional leadership has assisted in enhancing partnerships and assisting in overcoming hindrances.

PHP personnel also collaborated in the development of our own Regional BT Grant to assure substantive activities in counties without local health departments. *For more information, contact Luis Gonzalez, Bioterrorism, at (713) 767-3343 or e-mail luis.gonzalez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public Health Radio Air Time

To strengthen community partnership and increase awareness of Public Health, the regional staff, Drs. Aftab Hashim and Waseem Ahmed, have established a partnership with Southeast Asian (SEA) Community Media Services and Sangeet Radio, to provide culturally sensitive public health information to the Southeast Houston Community in Urdu/Hindi. Sangeet listeners are over 100,000 members who reside in the Houston area. A public health segment named “Hifzaan-e-Sihat” (Public Health) airs every Friday from 7:10 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.

Public health issues addressed to date include: TDH mission, goals and objectives; Childhood Immunization; Adult Vaccination; Vaccination for International travel; West Nile virus; Public Health Alert and Advisory (SARS, Heat and Hurricane precautions). Other Public Health issues will be incorporated based on community health needs.

Community members of Sangeet Radio have expressed their appreciation to Regional staff for their efforts. These services are consistent with continued development of a positive community image of TDH and will assist in reducing health disparities. *For more information, contact Aftab Hashim, Disease Control & Quality Assurance, at (713) 767-3023 or e-mail aftab.hashim@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Immunizations Mini Conference

On June 30, Region 6/5 South held an Immunization mini conference. The purpose of the conference was to “develop a regional plan to address immunization related issues and to enhance immunization rates in our communities.” Representatives from 20 different agencies/organizations attended the conference and committed their support and assistance to enhancing children’s immunization rates. Participants discussed opportunities, barriers and possible strategies specific to the Region. The group agreed to focus on several relevant topics: parental education, provider education; legislative issues; developing a registry coalition; resource development and enhancing involvement of community-based and faith based organizations. Sub-groups were formed to address these areas. A formal group was established and will be called “Public Health Region 6/5 South Immunization Coalition”. *For more information, contact Aftab Hashim, Disease Control & Quality Assurance, at (713) 767-3023 or e-mail aftab.hashim@tdh.state.tx.us.*

On July 7 and 8, a TDH team of 4 epidemiologists and 6 sanitarians was dispatched to interview sick and non-sick inmates in the unit. Since the information extracted from the questionnaires showed that most interviewed ill inmates ate either the pea salad or smothered chicken which contained *Salmonella* served at the lunch on July 2 and the pea salad’s Odds Ratio for illness was very statistically significant ($p=0.00$), the pea salad was considered the most likely main source for the outbreak. *For more information, contact Huai Lin, Regional Epidemiologist, at (713) 767-3232 or e-mail huai.lin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



West Nile Virus

As of July 24, Zoonosis Control (ZC) Region 6/5S has verified 4 human West Nile virus (WNV) meningoencephalitis cases: 2 in Montgomery county; 1 in Harris county; and 1 in Jefferson county. Four blood donors tested positive for WNV in Houston earlier this month. None of these patients have actually been sick from the virus and therefore are not included as official human cases. There are positive WNV birds in Orange, Montgomery and Harris counties; positive mosquito pools in Jefferson and Harris counties; and 1 positive horse in Montgomery County. *For more information, contact Dana Wiltz-Beckham, Zoonosis Control Program, at (713) 767-3300 or e-mail dana.beckham@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 7



West Nile Virus Presentation

On June 3, the Zoonosis Control Program presented a program to Hamilton, Texas Lion's Club members on West Nile Virus. West Nile Virus transmission, surveillance, and 2002 data were discussed. The City Manager of Hamilton expressed interest in starting a mosquito surveillance program to complement the City's mosquito adulticiding program.

For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.



Short Dated Human Rabies Immune Globulin

During June and July, the Region 7 Zoonosis Control Program staff coordinated the use of short dated Human Rabies Immune Globulin within TDH's inventory. Through statewide teamwork, Zoonosis Control and Immunization programs shifted product to areas of need in an effort to minimize loss of product. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Clean Indoor Air Policies

The Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control is currently working with the following Coalitions/Communities on clean indoor air policies. The process begins with education of the coalition members and their communities in tobacco prevention and control prior to proposing a model ordinance.

Hillsboro -- Hill County Wellness Committee – Hillsboro has expressed an interest in working towards a clean indoor air policy for their community.

Temple -- Breathe EZ Coalition – This coalition has been meeting for approximately four months. They have designed a recruitment tool and are embarking on a recruitment drive to include diverse representation on the coalition.

Georgetown – The Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control is partnering with the American Cancer Society to work with a group of individuals that are ready to begin work on building a coalition for a clean indoor air ordinance for Georgetown.

Marble Falls—Marble Falls Safe Air Coalition is re-grouping after a defeat by City Council on their proposal for a clean indoor air ordinance. The next step is to re-group and possibly embark on an “education campaign” for the community before making a new proposal.

Killeen—A committee of three council members are in the beginning stages of working on a smoke-free ordinance for city property and outdoor sports areas. The Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control has offered assistance and has provided informational materials on second hand smoke and copies of ordinances that have been passed by other communities. *For more information, contact Sylvia Barron, Office of Smoking and Health, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2350, or e-mail sylvia.barron@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 8



Local Public Health Leadership Conference

Region 8 had a full house at TCID for its Quarterly Local Public Health Leadership Conference on June 26. Over 75 professionals were present for a workshop on Foodborne Disease Outbreak Investigation put on by IDEAS and Region 8 EPI Response Team Members. *For more information, contact Sandra Morris, Tuberculosis Elimination, at (210) 949-2043 or e-mail sandra.morris@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public Health Workforce Issues

Region 8 staff met with members of the Health Education Training Centers Alliance Of Texas (HETCAT), the CDC's Office of Public Health Practice (OPHP), and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) on July 8. Topics discussed included Public Health Workforce issues including innovative roles for "Promotoras" in bioterrorism preparedness. *For more information, contact Chip Riggins, Regional Director, at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggins@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public Health Support Since Hurricane

Since Hurricane Claudette's appearance on the coast of Region 8 on July 15, Region 8 staff in programs and sub offices have been providing public health support to affected communities. At the time of this writing, Region 8 continues to work with local health departments to monitor disease and injury trends in affected counties. To-date, there is no evidence of preventable or communicable disease outbreaks related to this storm. All Retail and Manufactured food facilities have been surveyed, adulterated food items have been destroyed and processes for reopening established. Hospitals, Longterm care facilities, pharmacies, doctor's offices and dialysis centers are operational in affected counties. Meat processing establishments overseen by TDH are operating as usual. *For more information, contact Steve Hannemann, Region 8, at (210) 949-2154 or e-mail steve.hannemann@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Health Steps

Region 8 Texas Health Steps staff hosted a Provider Appreciation Luncheon on July 17. Commissioner Sanchez was on hand to personally recognize some 130 providers and staff who care for Medicaid Children by providing Medical, Dental and Case Management services. *For more information, contact Starlite Folley, EPSDT Screens, at (210) 949-2112 or e-mail starlite.folley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Post-event Plan to Provide Rapid Immunizations

Del Rio will be the site July 30 and 31 for testing a local post-event plan to provide rapid immunizations in the 28 county-area of Region 8. The City of Del Rio, Val Verde County, the TDH and Val Verde Regional Medical Center will conduct the exercise. All local health departments within Region 8 and their emergency management coordinators have been invited to participate. The Texas Engineering Extension Service's National Emergency Response Training Center and the University of Texas at Houston School of Public Health are assisting. Last year, communities wrote plans for how they would vaccinate large numbers of people in the event of a deliberate bioterrorism attack. The exercise this week will be used to see how well the plans work before a real situation occurs. These plans also may be used when immunizations are needed to prevent naturally occurring diseases such as meningitis. *For more information, contact Chip Riggins, Regional Director, at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Regions 9 and 10



The Texas Caring for Children Foundation

The Texas Caring for Children Foundation is extending their Care Van Immunization initiative to El Paso. The Foundation leads a statewide coalition of private and public agencies targeting immunizations for underserved children. Support includes the acquisition of immunization vans to access remote sights. Dr. Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, delivered a keynote address during the kick-off event. The Foundation will be working with public health to extend their initiative to other parts of West Texas. *For more information, contact Dr. Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*